

NEWS *from the National Wildlife Refuge System*

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CELEBRATE WILDLIFE DURING NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE WEEK OCTOBER 12-18, 1997

There are hundreds of special places across the country where you can see bald eagles soar, watch buffalo roam, hear the honk of a Canada goose and the cry of the loon, marvel at the flutter of an endangered butterfly, or wet a line for trophy trout.

These special places are called national wildlife refuges, and there are more than 500 of them throughout the United States, many within an hour's drive of major cities. The 92-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System is a unique part of America's natural heritage, one which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been in the business of safeguarding for nearly 100 years.

During its annual celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week the second week of October, the Fish and Wildlife Service showcases the special scenic beauty and bountiful wildlife that seek refuge on the world's largest and most diverse network of lands and waters dedicated to plants and animals and their habitat.

"We hope the American people will consider National Wildlife Refuge Week an open invitation to come learn about and enjoy our rich wildlife resources on national wildlife refuges," said Jamie Rappaport Clark, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "I'd like to think people also will come away with a respect and appreciation for the National Wildlife Refuge System and its wildlife conservation mission."

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AMERICA'S NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES...
where wildlife comes naturally!

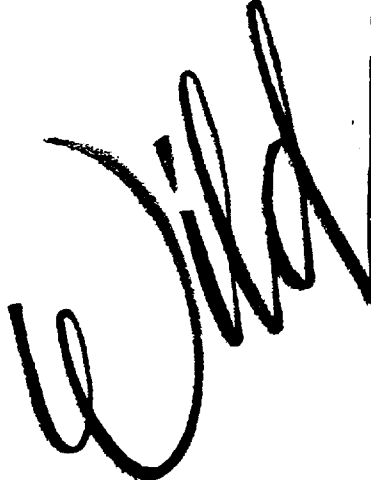
This year's National Wildlife Refuge Week celebration takes place October 12-18, during which time hundreds of special events across the country are planned, with activities such as fishing derbies, nature walks, birding tours, special hunts, nature photography and wildlife art contests, and environmental education.

The National Wildlife Refuge System includes scenic lands of astounding beauty and remarkable variety, from the tallgrass prairie in Iowa to the moss-draped cypress stands in the swamps of Louisiana, from yucca forests of Nevada to the icy Arctic Slope of Alaska, from the great Okefenokee swamp on the Florida-Georgia border to the gentle waterfalls on the island of Kauai.

What all these special places have in common, however, is they are prime wildlife habitat. Hundreds of national wildlife refuges strategically located along the four major "flyways" ensure ducks, geese, and even tiny songbirds have places to rest on their long, annual migrations. About 60 refuges are home to endangered species like the bald eagle, Florida manatee, and whooping crane. Still others host buffalo, elk, antelope, and bighorn sheep. From wildflowers to caribou, national wildlife refuges are places where plants and animals reign supreme.

This was President Teddy Roosevelt's idea when he established tiny Pelican Island in Florida in 1903 as the first national wildlife refuge. At the turn of the century, millions of birds were being wantonly killed or slaughtered for their feathers to meet the fashion demands of the day. Roosevelt's mission was clear: protect Pelican Island's birds from poachers and plume hunters. With that simple promise of wildlife protection, the National Wildlife Refuge System was born.

Not only are they havens for wildlife, but national wildlife refuges are also scenic get-aways for nearly 30 million Americans each year. Hiking nature trails, birdwatching, hunting, fishing, and nature photography are all popular activities on refuges. Hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren visit refuges each year to learn about nature and the environment.



FACTS *from the National Wildlife Refuge System*

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Birdwatching:

Because the National Wildlife Refuge System's origin is rooted in the protection of migratory birds, many refuges have been established along the four major migration flyways, as well as the prairie pothole region of the Upper Midwest, often dubbed "The Duck Factory." Excellent bird-watching opportunities abound on refuges. Here are just a few:

Cape May National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey is the first refuge giving top priority to the protection of migrating songbirds. A most interesting spectacle occurs on the Delaware Bay in the summer as horseshoe crabs come ashore to mate and are greeted by millions of shorebirds, including hundreds of thousands of red knots, thousands of short-billed dowitchers, Atlantic sanderlings, and ruddy turnstones, which greedily feed on their eggs. In the fall, tens of thousands of raptors use the refuge, including peregrine falcons, osprey, kestrels, and sharp-shinned hawks.

The largest concentrations of waterfowl in North America can be seen on **six Klamath Basin national wildlife refuges on the California-Oregon border**. Twenty different duck species and snow, Ross', Canada, and white-fronted geese number in the millions during migration, darkening the skies. In the fall, about 10,000 tundra swans use the refuges as well. Hundreds of bald eagles make up the largest concentration in this country outside of Alaska. Nesting birds include white pelicans, white-faced ibises, and golden-tufted eared grebes; breeding birds include avocets, coots, and black-necked stilts; and smaller birds such as hermit warblers, tricolored blackbirds, and mountain quail are also present on these refuges.

Wading birds are a sight to see on **Florida's J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge**, especially during November through April. Snowy and reddish egrets, white ibises, and roseate spoonbills are among the great spectacles. Other birding attractions are yellow- and black-crowned night herons, black skimmers, shorebirds such as plovers and dowitchers, bald eagles, osprey, brown and white pelicans, and red-shouldered hawks. Songbirds include warblers, indigo and painted buntings, cedar waxwings, and mangrove cuckoos.

Shorebird birding at **Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Utah** can't be beat. Spring and fall are the best times to catch millions of migrating birds such as golden-tufted eared grebes, swallows, marbled godwits, and long-billed dowitchers. Located where Bear River empties into the Great Salt Lake, the refuge also hosts 12,000 tundra swans in the fall--the largest

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concentration anywhere. Shoveler, green-winged teal, pintails, canvasbacks, cinnamon teal, and other ducks number about a half-million in the fall. Other refuge birds include avocets, white pelicans, Western grebes, curlews, spotted sandpipers, bald and golden eagles, and blue and black-crowned night herons.

Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge in Montana hosts 250 different species of birds. Franklin's gulls, black terns, black-crowned night herons, eared grebes, and white-faced ibises nest in the bulrush marshes of Lake Bowdoin, while white pelicans, double-crested cormorants, great blue herons, and California and ring-billed gulls occupy its several islands. More than 30 shorebird species, including piping plovers, avocets, marbled godwits, and black-necked stilts nest or stopover on the refuge. In the winter, snowy owls, snow buntings, Bohemian waxwings, northern goshawks, bald and golden eagles, and rough-legged hawks are often present.

Erie National Wildlife Refuge in Pennsylvania hosts more than 200 bird species: nesting songbirds like the rare Henslow's sparrow in the spring and summer; shorebirds such as sandpipers and yellowlegs use the mudflats during summer and fall; and black-capped chickadees, nuthatches, downy woodpeckers, and dark-eyed juncos spend the winter.

Forty million seabirds of 30 different species breed and nest on the slopes, cliffs, burrows, and rock crevices on **Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge**. Interspersed on the Aleutian Islands and off the west coast of Alaska, five units of this refuge host huge seabird colonies including fulmars, storm-petrels, cormorants, kittiwakes, murres, auklets, and puffins--many of these populations setting world records. The Pribilof Islands host the largest bird colony in North America, with up to 3 million murres, puffins, and red- and black-legged kittiwakes.

Fishing:

Two-hundred-ninety-three national wildlife refuges are open to fishing, offering outstanding opportunities for the nation's 50 million anglers. Some notable contenders:

Wetting a line on any of **Valentine National Wildlife Refuge's** nine sportfishing lakes can yield trophy northern pike and bluegill renowned throughout the State of Nebraska.

The wildlife-rich estuary making up **Florida's Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge**, a new refuge, is a great spot for redfish, snook, sea trout, and tarpon fishing.

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The **Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge**, stretching 220 miles along the river through the states of Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, sports walleye, bass, perch, catfish, and crappie, among others.

Seney National Wildlife Refuge in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan offers great northern pike, bass, and brook and brown trout fishing. Winter ice fishing is popular.

Fighting bluefish and stripers are much sought-after by saltwater fishermen visiting **Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge in Rhode Island**.

At **Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana**, a brand new refuge, anglers can seek bass, bream, and crappie in the 1,600-acre Black Bayou Lake, an oxbow lake amidst bottomland hardwoods.

The emerald-green waters of the Kenai River offer trophy king salmon for anglers casting a line on **Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska**. Rainbow trout and kokanee can be fished in the refuge's numerous lakes.

The Togiak, Kanektok, and Goodnews Rivers on **Alaska's Togiak National Wildlife Refuge** offer some of the world's finest remote salmon and trout fishing. The 1,500 miles of riverine habitat at Togiak teem with five species of Pacific salmon, rainbow trout, Arctic grayling, Dolly Varden, and Arctic char.

Hunting:

More than 1 ½ million people out of the 14 million hunters in this country seek their quarry on national wildlife refuges. From big game to waterfowl, 287 national wildlife refuges offer hunting. A few excellent programs include:

At **Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska**, hunters can walk the rolling and ruggedly beautiful hills in pursuit of upland game birds like grouse, prairie chicken, and pheasant, or try for white-tailed and mule deer.

Moose hunting is a popular pastime on many of **Alaska's interior refuges, including Innoko, Kanuti, Kuyukuk, Nowitna, and Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuges**. These refuges also offer black and brown bear, barren-ground caribou, and Dall's sheep hunting programs.

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Delaware's Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge is an excellent place for hunting snow geese, ducks, and white-tailed deer hunt.

In addition to snipe, pheasant, and quail hunting, **Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon** offers tremendous geese and duck hunting.

White-tailed deer hunting is a main attraction at **Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Alabama**, as well as squirrel, rabbit, racoon, and opossum and quail hunting.

J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota is noted for its snow and Canada geese and duck hunting, as well as grouse, partridge, pheasant, turkey, and white-tailed deer hunting programs.

Environmental Education:


Hundreds of national wildlife refuges have environmental education programs, ranging from interpretive nature walks for local schoolchildren to full-scale teacher-training programs. Many have environmental education centers. Hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren visit refuges to learn about the environment. A few popular environmental education refuges are:

Thousands of schoolchildren who visit **Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge** each year learn about habitat conservation, especially the importance of saltmarsh habitat to migratory birds and endangered species. The refuge hosts outdoor classroom and other activities as well as an environmental education center in San Jose.

Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Iowa just opened a new Prairie Learning Center, where schoolchildren and others learn about the refuge's extensive efforts to restore the tallgrass prairie, including reintroduction of bison on the refuge. The learning center has many educational exhibits on prairie management and restoration, a simulation of an underground burrow giving the illusion of being an insect in the soil, as well as interactives and theaters.

Patuxent Research Refuge in Maryland offers wildlife management demonstration areas and outdoor education sites for school classes year-round. The refuge hosts an extensive teacher-training program for environmental learning. Its visitor center focuses on wildlife research and management practices, as well as endangered species and habitat conservation.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge near Minneapolis provides curriculum-based field trips for students ranging from pre-school through high school, a river stewardship program focusing on water quality, and helps Boy and Girl Scouts hone wildlife viewing skills. The refuge has a visitor center with interactive exhibits displaying the history of the Minnesota River and how wetlands are managed for waterfowl and other wildlife.



FACTS *from the National Wildlife Refuge System*

ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTION ON THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

About 60 national wildlife refuges host approximately 200 of the nation's plants and animals that are protected under the Endangered Species Act. Here are just a few refuges where endangered species are making their recovery:

Perhaps the most well-known national wildlife refuge established for an endangered species is **Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas**, home of the only remaining migratory flock of the endangered whooping crane. The stately whoopers, the tallest birds in North America, winter at Aransas during December through March, while **Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in Kansas** hosts some whoopers stopping over during migration.

Hundreds of rare Hawaiian plants and birds would most likely be extinct if not for the **Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge in Hawaii**. Endangered orange akepas, 'Ios (Hawaiian hawk), and pueos (short-eared owls) are a few of the unique species protected there.

Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia was the first refuge established specifically to protect America's national symbol, the threatened bald eagle.

A brand new refuge, **Key Cave National Wildlife Refuge in Alabama**, protects the endangered gray bat and the Alabama cavefish, which is believed to number less than 100.

Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge was established to protect its namesake, one of the most critically endangered species, with only 20 to 50 remaining.

Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Massachusetts and **Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia** both host endangered beach-loving piping plovers.

A reintroduction program for the endangered black-footed ferret is taking place on **Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in Montana**, with naturally reproducing populations now established as a result.

Red wolf "howlings" are now a popular activity at **Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina**, one of two refuges hosting the endangered animal as part of its recovery program (the other is **Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge in South Carolina**).

Ouray National Wildlife Refuge in Utah is key habitat for Colorado River endangered fish and, uniquely, houses the Ouray National Fish Hatchery on its premises.

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